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The Legacy of the Fathers

Baccalaureate Address

OF

PRESIDENT HOWARD EDWARDS

OF THE

Rhode Island State College

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THE LEGACY OF THE FATHERS

"And the chief captain answered, With a great sum obtained I this freedom. And Paul said, But I was born free." Acts XXII, 28.

Thus spoke two men concerning the freedom of citizenship under the Roman empire. The soldier, to indicate the value that he placed upon it, emphasizes the greatness of the sum that he paid for it; the apostle, prizing the privilege none the less, glories in the greater claim that his fathers were also free and that the precious boon came to him by inheritance. He was born free. Such is the attitude toward Roman citizenship of men at the two extremes of mental outlook and environment, the one by profession a soldier, the other an apostle of Christian righteousness. Now the freedom which these two men so highly valued was that of the Roman empire, such freedom from personal harm as might survive under the absolutism of an Augustus or Tiberius Caesar, a Caligula, a Claudius, or a Nero. to whose cruelty and luxurious lust Paul later owed the loss of his life. There is no comparison between the freedom of even the noblest Roman of Paul's day and that of the humblest human being in this American Republic of ours. The question that for many months has been knocking upon the door of my mind and calling more and more insistently for a reply is, Do our young people, especially in our colleges, begin to realize the preciousness of American citizenship? Do they stand ready, if necessary, to guard it with their lives?

THE PRICE OF OUR FREEDOM

For this freedom of ours did not come by chance, and will not be perpetuated by nerveless sentimentalism and careless short-sightedness. Our fathers bought this freedom with a great price. They bought it at Bunker Hill, at Valley Forge, at Bennington and at Yorktown. They paid the price of four years of civil war that "this nation, under God," might "have a new birth of freedom and that government of the

people, by the people, and for the people" might "not perish from the earth." They have transmitted this freedom so purchased, to us, and we can proudly boast that we are born free. Shall we guard and maintain it? Shall our children also be born free? The answer is with you, young men, in the attitude you take toward national policies and national duties.

No sane man desires war; no wise man but would go very far to avoid its unspeakable horrors. We do not need to be told of them; they leap at us from the pages of every newspaper we take up. But likewise no sane man does not recognize that great powers of evil are still abroad in the world and that they are restrained and can be controlled only by physical force. Inside the nation we call this control the police force of city or of state. Outside, between nations, there exists no police force, and every nation must guard its own existence and keep its own honor by preparedness of its own force, just as the man of earlier days, before efficient police control, taught first of all his own hands to protect his head. It is idle and worse, not to face the facts of the world in which we live, because we long for and labor for the conditions of an ideal world which does not exist, and the one ugly fact that we cannot ignore is that righteousness cannot afford to allow unrighteousness to control and exercise the physical forces of nature and of man.

THE JINGO DANGER—WHERE?

I find it, therefore, exceedingly disturbing and alarming to read from a leader of opinion, for instance, that "force never settled anything." Then our Revolutionary War, which settled the independent status of this nation, and our Civil War, which settled the question of slavery and welded the confederation of states into a Union, were dreadful orgies of crime, accomplishing nothing.

Again I read, "In many of our universities large numbers of students have sent many letters and petitions to

President Wilson urging the government at Washington not to allow"—what? The inconceivable barbarities of Belgian invasion? The drowning of new hundreds of innocent women and children? No, no; alas! no. Their petition is simply "not to allow the country to be dragged into war."

I have received lengthy warnings about "militaristic jingoism" in this country. Men have written me to protest against the military drill required by law in our colleges, and rarely carried on voluntarily. No doubt you have seen, as I have, severe strictures upon the organization of the boy scouts. Really, I am at a loss to know what it all means, except that I fear that it means disaster and shame to my country under present world conditions. Where is this dreaded jingo spirit? How does it express itself? The national army uses every inducement, yet is not able to keep itself recruited up anywhere near its exceedingly modest legal limit; the navy is largely unmanned and, in the recent manoeuvres, showed itself both lacking in necessary units and unable to prevent the landing of any respectable force upon our shores. There is not a state in the Union whose volunteer forces are equal in numbers or training to the demands that riot and insurrection have at times made upon them. Our powder works have until recently fairly gone into hysterics over "farming with dynamite" in order to furnish a market for their product. With thirty-five years' experience in military schools, no one knows better than I how difficult it is to keep up any sort of interest and discipline in the military drill. Where does this dreaded jingo militarism have its local habitation? Really, I can only explain the anti-militarism of some of our people by assuming that they are trying to exorcise militarism from Germany by disbanding the police force in Providence. They are subduing castles in Spain by tilting against windmills—in New England. They would cause their own children to take a bath every time they see a street gamin with a dirty face.

THE REAL DANGER.

If this were all, it might be passed over with a smile, but it is far from being all. The first duty which every nation owes its people is protection against outside attack, and for this protection the nation must rely upon the training, the valor, the willingness to make necessary sacrifices that have been bred into its men. Our pacifists are weakening the very foundations of national safety, by teaching our men to eschew and despise the means of defense. They call us to peace! peace! when there is no peace, when the whole earth is filled with tumult and violence. They talk of a million men, in case of a call for defence, rushing to arms in twenty-four hours. Where are the arms they would rush to? Where the ammunition, where the trained leadership? Where the commissariat? Where the hospital corps? What they are really asking is that a mere mob futilely offer itself for sacrifice, and that an organized government should never be forgiven for asking.

Optimism is an excellent philosophy—the right and indeed the only proper kind of philosophy. But to refuse to face facts because they are unpleasant or undesired, to wave aside as phantoms things that are real and tangible, is not optimism, but rather either folly or cowardice. I too am an optimist. I hope that my house will not burn; and, indeed, being a careful man, I really believe that it will not burn. Nevertheless, seeing that the houses of others equally careful have burned and do burn, I insure my house. So I hope that we may not be involved in war. I cannot say, at the present time, that I do not believe we shall be so involved; but, be that as it may, I know that others equally undesirous of war and equally innocent of any offence have been visited with fire and sword and barbarities unutterable. I know that the one great nation of Central Europe whose lands have not been ravaged, whose women and children have not been ravished and tortured is the one and only nation that was thoroughly prepared for war. I know that, at this

very time, this nation of ours, conscientiously seeking to perform all its duties as a neutral to all the warring nations, has been deliberately attacked in the exercise of its primal rights; its property has been wantonly destroyed and the innocent lives of more than a hundred of American men, women and children have been taken. I know that, from the very beginning of this war, the doctrine of "frightfulness" has been deliberately adopted, and utter disregard of all convention or law, human or divine, has been consistently shown. The fire is all around our house; shall we not insure now, before it is too late?

THE NON-ARMAMENT PROPAGANDA.

Under the conditions now existing, it is difficult to speak of the propagandists of non-armament, of restricted armament or of disarmament, with due moderation. With an armed and mutinous crew in this world-ship of ours, it is simply madness to insist that the officers throw their revolvers overboard. When insurrection is raging in a city, and murderous mobs are burning its houses, and pillaging its treasures, we do not insist on disbanding the police; on the contrary, we call on the Governor to send armed troops, and woe be unto us if he does not have them to send.

Among these apostles of peace and disarmament are some of the noblest people this country has produced. In the list I find the names of intimate friends, some of the finest characters I have ever known, yet in denouncing their propaganda at this time, I am profoundly convinced that I am doing God and my country whatever service in me lies. The time may come, and I pray God it may come soon, when the civilized world can organize peace and control the earth with a federal police system; but that time is not now, and it can never come as long as a single powerful nation is animated by the doctrines of a Bismarck, a Moltke, and a Treitschke, and is dominated by the mediaeval brain of a Hohenzollern or a Hapsburg.

OUR DUTY UNDER A PEACE LEAGUE

Meanwhile, for any single nation to attempt disarmament or to refuse adequately to arm itself, is to invite dishonor, disgrace and disaster. Why not face the facts fairly and fully? With the present feeling in Germany, does any man doubt that the one thing standing between us and attack from Germany is, not the rectitude of our intentions nor the unpreparedness of our army and navy; it is simply the navy of England and the army of the Allies. I repeat it; if we do not have war with Germany, it will be simply because the warring of the Allies prevents Germany at this time from undertaking it. Does it not seem unmanly, un-American, despicable, to hug to ourselves the delusion of superior virtue in not preparing to do for ourselves that which we, with no single word of gratitude, receive through the blood and agony of men whom we condemn for maintaining armaments? I will go much farther. The advocates of disarmament recognize that the mere casting away of arms will not suffice to keep peace on the earth, that somewhere there must be a force at hand to quell disorder and prevent just what has happened in Belgium and Luxembourg; and their solution of the problem, indeed the only conceivable one, is that the other nations should combine to quell by their united force the aggression of any recalcitrant nation. Now it must be clear that this plan or any plan like it demands two things—first, the clear determination of the fact of aggression; second, in every nation a sense of responsibility for the crushing of aggression and a readiness, in the fulfilment of that responsibility, to take up arms for suppressing and punishing aggression.

The case of Belgium is a case in every way adapted to test the sincerity and logic of the disarmament advocate. It is made to order, so to speak. Never can we hope for the clearer establishment of the fact of unprovoked aggression. Not only does the court of the world's opinion convict Germany of it, but she herself

through her highest official admits it. What, then, about national sense of responsibility to suppress the aggression, and willingness to take up arms to meet the duty? Has the disarmament propagandist been urging us to take up the cause of Belgium? Has he been heard to insist that navy and army be modernized and strengthened so that we might do our fair share in suppressing this supremely wanton lawlessness? Does the ease or difficulty of the task in any way affect, in his eyes, the imperativeness of the duty? It is despicable in the sheriff to carry out the sentence of the law on a poor wretch without arms and without friends but to let the rich and powerful offender go free; and worse than that, such a course renders the law itself contemptible and the sheriff's office a farce. If the cry of Belgium did not awaken in the pacifist the sense of responsibility, it is idle to expect that any future similar contingency would call forth unselfish action in men and in nations, whether bound in a general compact or not.

ENGLAND'S ACTION

But there was one nation that did hear the cry of Belgium and is now battling for her redemption. Whatever may be said of England in the past, and there is much in her past to condemn, to me she is glorified today by the purity of her cause, the clearness of her vision, the greatness of her sacrifices, the steadfastness of her purpose, and the loyalty of her heart. I do not mean for a moment to imply that England was entirely altruistic in going to war. But I do mean that none of the causes leading to her decision was unworthy or sordid, and that the one cause which united the nation and decisively turned the scale for war was Belgium's wrongs. I make no apology for this digression. It is simply the tribute due to a noble deed nobly done.

THE FATHERS' LEGACY.

Our fathers gave to us a legacy, not only of a united nationality, but also of a broad and teeming land, and a theory of organized government. Of

these last two I do not deem the latter less valuable than the former.

It is a wonderful land—this broad belt of plain and prairie, of mountain and table-land, extending from Atlantic to Pacific, a land far surpassing the fabled wealth of Ormus and of Ind, a land of a hundred million of busy people, of great cities and smiling countryside, a glorious land of peace and plenty, of unity and concord, of liberty, opportunity and intelligence. Yet beyond all this is a heritage of institutions, traditions, human ideals far more wonderful and precious. The best material things of life—the air, the sunshine, the rain, the blue sky and the green earth—come to us so abundantly and so naturally that we scarcely think of them as blessings at all. Nay, we frequently grow irritated at their monotony of abundance, and restlessly seek for change even at the expense of comfort. So it seems to me that we frequently comport ourselves toward our institutions and traditions, taking them as a matter of course and failing to give thanks; and sometimes, alas! even doing our utmost, through indifference or greed, or lust of power, or fear and cowardice, to destroy them. Only recently I read from a responsible source, with much other material of the same kind, that it is far from being established that republican government is the ultimate form for insuring the welfare of society and preserving the covenant ark of civilization.

Now I do not know what is in the womb of time, but I do know that at present there are but two essential forms of government, the one autocratic, claiming its power from above or from conquest, and holding its will supreme, and the other popular, holding its power as delegated from the people, and pledged to hear and heed the mandates of public opinion. It matters not what names and disguises a government may take, the essential fact is the acknowledged origin and source of power. England, for instance, has a king, but under the transparent veil of royalty and aristocracy, the government is that of the commons—representatives of the people duly chosen. In fact, theoretically and legally, the commons are the people and

are all-powerful. On the other hand, Mexico, under the form of a republic when it had a government, was really an autocracy pure and simple.

AUTOCRATIC GERMANY

Germany is an autocracy. Its Emperor says so, and there is no word of denial from the German people. "We Hohenzollerns," said he, "take our crown from God alone, and to God alone we are responsible in the fulfillment of duty."

* * * "Only one is master of this country. That is I. Who oppose me I shall crush to pieces." Says Bismarck: "With us, there is no sovereign will but that of the king. It is he alone who wills, because he alone has the right to do so." In a state so ruled it is obvious that a free press and a free tribunate cannot exist, and so we find in the first fourteen years of William the Second's reign six thousand prosecutions for lese majeste, an offence the exact limits of which no one knows, we find a police force from whose arbitrary control there is for the people practically no appeal; we find an army whose sole head is the Emperor, and whose youngest lieutenant takes social precedence of the wisest philosopher or mere scientist; we find a revolution in the atmosphere of education and among the university men there are now the "most loud-voiced jingos, the blind admirers of unscrupulous success." Along that line today is the surest road to preferment. Where the whole pyramid of society thus stands on its apex, it is not surprising to find the sober and veracious Munsterburg telling us that "In the German view the state is not for the individuals, but the individuals for the state."

A GENUINE DEMOCRACY

The United States, on the other hand, has the popular form of government. Our fathers gave it to us. They placed the pyramid upon its base. They taught us that power originates among the people governed, and that the governing officials appointed by the people are the servants of the people. They arranged a government of checks and balances so designed that no official might be able to usurp dangerous power unto himself. We have an untrammelled press, local self-govern-

ment, an independent judiciary, and full and free opportunity for each citizen to develop his own individuality and initiative. With us the state exists for the people.

There are those among us who are inclined to smile at the resounding phrases of the Declaration of Independence, who look with suspicion upon the qualifications of the people to rule themselves and view with complacency the growing social stratification in our country. But, nevertheless, there is none among us who does not feel deep down in his soul that somewhere in those stately periods there lies a truth inestimably precious to mankind, the secret of humanity's progress, and the key to human destiny. It assures us of equality in delegating power to our servants in office, equality of privilege, responsibility and treatment before the law, equality of opportunity for self-development, equality of burdens and duties toward society, and equality of reward for whatever of success is achieved. The only inequality it permits is the inequality of that phrase of divine wisdom: "He that is greatest among you shall be your servant."

And in the main this attitude of service has been largely characteristic of our rulers; for the man who is daily compelled to recognize that his power is that of his office and not of himself, that it is delegated to him only for a certain time and for a definite purpose, cannot and will not so far mistake the situation as to assume to dispense as benignant favors to his subjects the duties that he owes to his fellow-citizens.

Here, then, are the two ideals of government. In one, the individual exists for the state, which is incarnated in the glory and power of a Hohenzollern dynasty; in the other the state exists for the welfare of the individual, which means for the highest development and happiness of all the people. Which is better, autocracy or democracy? Which is more effective for the welfare of mankind? My own conviction is that popular government with all its faults—its inefficiency, its lost motion, its costliness, its failures—is

infinitely preferable to even the autocratic efficiency of Germany. For a century and a quarter we have tried this "mob government," as Bismarck called it, and I confidently maintain that, measured in terms of human happiness and advancement, no autocracy of either the past or the present can begin to show equal results through an equal period of time.

AUTOCRACY INCOMPETENT.

Autocracy requires an autocrat—a man, or a dynasty, or a coterie that somehow is assumed as peculiarly fitted to rule. Now the one uniform teaching of history is that there is no dynasty or arbitrarily limited or designated class of men that is pre-eminently fitted for the profession or trade of governing. No class of men ever existed wise enough and morally strong enough to be permanently trusted to legislate for other and different classes, however poor and degraded. History consists of a dreary succession of failures in government, and these failures are the failures of monarchism.

Why, look you, we have today the most gigantic collapse of civilization the world has ever seen. Somebody has failed and failed horribly in his function of governing. Who is it? Hapsburg Francis Joseph, to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of his reign in Austria-Hungary, seizes Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Serbian race bitterly resents this action; a plot is formed and the crown prince, Hapsburg Francis Ferdinand, is assassinated. Meanwhile in Germany the pride and insolence of Hohenzollern William have grown until he measures himself only with God. For forty years the whole nation has obediently passed its daily life under the discipline of martial law and the military camp, and has been made mad with preachments about the German super-man, pan-Germanism, and *Macht-politik*. The nation, the army, the navy, the airships, the submarines, all are ready for the glorious adventure of world-dictatorship. The slogan had long before been announced in the Emperor's words, "Nothing must be done anywhere on the globe without the sanc-

tion of Germany's ruler." The assassination of one of the Lord's inchoate anointed is too opportune an occasion to be lost. Hohenzollern and Hapsburg put their heads together. Forthwith, an impossible forty-eight-hour ultimatum goes to Serbia—forty-eight hours, when it took President Wilson's cabinet ten days merely to perfect the phrasing of a note simply reiterating what had been said in a previous communication! Nations stood aghast at the impending chaos. They pleaded for time even to think. But no, for absolutism "the day" had come, the hour of triumph had struck. Europe resounds with the tread of marching columns, the horrors of Belgian invasion are upon us. For the death of one princeling millions of innocent men must die, womanhood must be outraged, and childhood tortured, burned, shot and drowned. The cause of civilization must be set back a hundred years, an unborn world must groan under the burden of a colossal debt, and even so the end is not yet.

This, young men, is not merely a gigantic failure of absolutist government; it is deliberate treason against the human race. Popular government or misgovernment has nothing parallel to offer. Anarchy itself can only feebly rival the horrors of this debacle.

And this, although the most stupendous, is far from being an isolated example of autocracy's crass incompetence to fulfill its metier of governing. Wars are symptomatic. They mean always inefficiency or folly or criminality in government somewhere. Take away from human history the dynastic wars and the wars of misguided ambition, and how many would be left? The whole history of the Hapsburgs is a history of dynastic wars in which the interests of those governed are sacrificed to the fury of efforts to obtain and maintain crowns for the sprigs of a family exceedingly commonplace in character and attainments. The autocracy of George III cost England her American colonies. That of the Louises of France plunged her people into the excesses of the French Revolution. The autocracy of

Napoleon deluged Europe in blood. The nascent autocracy of Southern slaveholders forced on America her civil war. And the record is the same everywhere; whenever and wherever a few have obtained firm and exclusive hold upon the reins of power, no matter under what disguise of form, there always we find disastrous failure in the functioning of government itself.

AUTOCRACY'S AMBITION

German apologists for this war will tell us that the present German territory is not large enough for the enormous increase of its people in numbers, that it lies in Central Europe, threatened on all sides by other nations, that all the earth is practically taken up, that the German race is a race of super-men whose Kultur (efficiency) will be lost to the world unless the nation can find room to develop, that this war was sooner or later inevitable—in order, of course, to dispossess some other nation or nations and to allow this new-born giant among nations to take his "place in the sun."

So far as the "threatening ring of iron" is concerned, the state of unpreparedness in England and Russia, and to a considerable degree in France, (well known, be it said, to the Germans), clearly disproves any existing danger to Germany. The threatening danger was evidently in the reversed direction; viz., from Germany to her neighbors. Again, as to the country being too small for the increase of its population, the contention ignores the fact that no single part of the earth is closed to the German man and woman. Asia, Africa, Australia, America, North and South, all are absolutely open to him, provided only he does not come as an armed band to dispossess those already here. Millions of them have been welcomed here and have found home, happiness and fortune among us. Their welfare does not demand enlargement of Hohenzollern dominion. They are not pining for the efficiency of the German army service, for the suppression of the right of free expression, for three hundred trials per

year for lese majeste. There is room here for millions more, and all that we shall ask in return for giving them the heartiest welcome and exactly equal privileges with ourselves is that they will leave the Kaiser and Kaiserism at home behind them.

When, therefore, we hear about compression and the consequent inevitability of a war for expansion, we ask, expansion of what? and the only logical answer is, the expansion of an imperial government, of the glory of a dynasty, of the range of one man's ambition. "The people exist for the state and the state is I, William Hohenzollern."

THE IMMEDIATE DANGER

It is this ruthless spirit of Machtpolitik, the right of might, that the Allies are warring against today. It is this spirit that has unified against Germany the solid opinion of all far-seeing Americans who value the heritage their fathers bought with unflinching courage on the battlefield. Think of it! It is the spirit that laid waste the cathedrals of innocent Belgium and extorted heavy indemnities from her starving people, that in order to simply terrorize drowned the innocent children on a Lusitania—it is this spirit that Mr. Bryan would meet with a year of senile discussion and a powerless Hague Convention at the end. It is this spirit that the pacifists are aiding and abetting with their non-armament propaganda among our school-children and our college boys! How the powers of Hell must rejoice over the blindness of good and honest men!

Do we say to ourselves in the face of this spirit, "A thousand shall fall at our side and ten thousand at our right hand, but it shall not come nigh us?" Why? Is not England its greatest foe, and are not our fields and factories England's one source of supply? Has not Germany used every means short of physical attack to have us place an embargo on shipments of ammunition and supplies? Is it not openly complained that, by stopping supplies, we could end the war in three weeks? I cannot for a moment believe that, at

Germany's behest, we will cravenly break a fundamental requirement of neutrality, basely betray the Allies into the hands of their enemies, and by closing our markets, not merely end the war, but decide it, and in favor of Germany. In the effort, therefore, to preserve our honor and good faith, we are incurring the bitter anger of Berlin; and haughty Berlin's anger means war, unless under the stress of present conditions on her battle lines she shall find her advantage in temporizing with us and speaking us fair.

There are not wanting other occasions for German antagonism. Our Monroe Doctrine is one of the foremost. Bismarck called it "a species of arrogance peculiarly American and entirely inexcusable." There is no doubt in my mind that Germany will one day call upon us to repudiate it or to take measures, in concurrence with the South American nations, to defend it. Germany fiercely resented our taking the Philippines over. Dewey tells us that, seventeen years ago in the blockade of Manila, the Germans assembled in the bay a stronger fleet than his own; that Von Diederich and his officers were discourteous and offensive to the last degree; and that, finally, a cruiser deliberately landed provisions. Then, just as Wilson is doing today, the American Admiral submitted an ultimatum. He sent his flag-lieutenant to Von Diederich with his compliments and the message that, if he wanted a fight, he could have it right now. The action of landing provisions was promptly disavowed and not repeated. Even then, however, in the final action to take Manila, Von Diederich moved his ships into a threatening position against Dewey. Then occurred a significant thing. The British senior captain Chichester ranged his British ships between those of Von Diederich and Dewey's fleet. There is more, but I have not time to tell it now. And yet the poseur Bryan talks about our "memories of an historic friendship with Germany!"

THE CONCLUSION

What does it all mean? It means

the same old story of autocratic inefficiency and un wisdom in government. It means the inevitable antagonism of Divine-right dynasties toward government from and of the people. It means the need of wise organization like that of the Swiss to meet an attack that will some day surely come. It means that the realities of life are stern and harsh, and that duty must be met, not by Utopian dreams of ease and happiness, but by courage and wisdom, steadiness of purpose and sacrifice even unto death.

Other than the direct relation of humanity with the Divine, I know of nothing more sacred than true patriotism. And so, on this quiet Sunday afternoon, as I stand before you for the last time as instructor and guide, I have thought it best under the conditions that face us once again to discuss with you your country's needs. You have been trained as scientists and workers. You have also learned the privileges and duties of citizenship. You go out tomorrow from our halls into the service of the Republic. As you pass out with the stamp of approval from your college, let her last word to you be a clarion summons to wisdom, loyalty and "the last full measure of devotion" to your country.

"You whom the fathers made free and
defended
Stain not the scroll that emblazons
their fame;
You whose fair heritage spotless descended
Leave not your children a birthright of
shame!"

—Holmes.

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